A CHARGE

TO THE CLERGY OF THE PROT. EPISC. CHURCH IN THE STATE OF OHIO,

ON

THE PREACHING OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED;

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION

OF THE DIOCESE

AT CHILLICOTHE, SEPTEMBER 5th, 1834.

BY

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AN EPISCOPAL CHARGE, &c.

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Brethren in the Ministry of Christ:

It has pleased God to allow us the pleasure of assembling ourselves together and consulting with one another for the promotion of the blessed Gospel committed to our trust. I would embrace the opportunity, thus presented, of addressing you in obedience to an enactment of our Church, which requires her Bishops occasionally and not unfrequently to deliver a charge to the clergy of their respective Dioceses. My object will be the promotion of an increase of faithfulness and of fruit in the discharge of your work as ambassadors for Christ; humbly beseeching Him without whom we can do nothing in wisdom, nothing in holiness, nothing to edification, to give me grace that in all things I may speak "as the oracles of God," in "the mind of Christ."

You are well aware that the great work for which your sacred office was established, is *the preaching of the Gospel.*

However various the means and modes by which christians of all orders are bound, in their respective spheres and according to their distinctive vocations, to be co-workers with God in promoting his kingdom; all are subordinate to—all depend for sufficiency upon, the faithful and enlightened execution of that last command of the Saviour to his Ministry: "*Go preach the Gospel.*" It was the simple, unquestioning obedience of an undaunted faith to this one command, united with unquenchable love to Christ and the souls of sinners, that constituted, under God, the whole power of the Apostolic ministry and gained those stupendous victories of the truth at which the weaker faith and more hesitating obedience of modern times have so much wondered. And none can read the Scriptures intelligently without perceiving that, as in the beginning, so now also and until the ending of all things terrestrial, it hath pleased God that sinners shall be saved chiefly

through the instrumentality of the *preaching* of the gospel; and especially, that the great things to come—the ingathering of the nations, the universal reign of the Son of Man as the accepted King over all people and languages, are to be accomplished by means which, without excluding the use of many subordinate measures, will refer the grand result to the *preaching* of the gospel—"the foolishness of preaching" as the chosen and chief ordinance of God, by which to make known his wisdom and power in saving them that believe. Hence should it be inferred that while there are many objects of christian benevolence which have an imperious claim on the affections and assistance of christians, none should stand so exalted in the hearts of all that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, as the increase of the number of devoted ministers of the gospel, and the furtherance of all, who have received the ministry, in that heavenly skill by which they may the most successfully preach the word, and that true missionary spirit by which they may emulate the example of the Apostles, till there be no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.

Another thing you cannot have failed to notice. While such eminent importance is attached to the *preaching* of the gospel—so that it is written that "faith cometh by hearing;" there is one distinguishing feature of the preaching of the Apostles, on the continual and prominent exhibition of which, they rested all their hope of advancing the cause of their Master. Various as were the topics on which they spake, and skillful as they were to accommodate their instructions to the different circumstances and characters of their hearers; there was one great subject in which all hearers were taught to behold the beginning and the ending of religion, the whole consolation of a sinful world—the whole business, strength and glory of a christian minister. They made it their invariable principle to know nothing, to glory in nothing, among men, but "Jesus Christ and him crucified" so that "every where, in the temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." To set forth the glories of his person and of his work—to teach him in his various offices and benefits, in his humiliation and death—his resurection and exaltation in his freeness of grace to receive and his fullness of grace to save the chief of sinners; to persuade men to flee to him as their

Refuge, to follow him as their Shepherd, to submit to him as their King, to rejoice in him as their everlasting portion, and always and by all means to glorify him as Head over all things for his people; this was their life's business unto which they had so separated themselves as to be virtually dead to whatever might hinder its promotion. Sitting at the feet of their inspiration, to learn by what teaching the minister of the Gospel, in these days, may hope to be made instrumental "in bringing many sons unto glory;" we obtain this most important lesson, that to preach "Christ crucified" is to preach the Gospel; that nothing can be done to any purpose for the salvation of sinners, but so far as this one subject is exhibited in simplicity; that while all learning and eloquence and human wisdom, without this, can do nothing; all that is feeble and foolish among the wise men of the world, if it have but this, may be mighty through God to confound the wise and win souls to Christ; consequently that all our talents and prayers should be drawn this way and concentrated upon this very thing, of learning through the enlightening of the Holy Ghost, the more simply, spiritually, and completely "to teach and preach Jesus Christ."

Dear brethren if this be a lesson for life, it is worth a thousand lives to know and practice it. Without it, what would it profit us, or the perishing souls to whom we are sent, should we understand all mysteries and all knowledge and speak with the various tongues of men and the eloquence of angels? Our preaching would be as effectual to the overturning of the kingdom of Satan in the hearts of men, as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal—while we, in the balance of the sanctuary, would weigh as "less than nothing and vanity."

Hence you may perceive the subject to which the remainder of this discourse will be devoted. What is it so to preach, that it may justly be said, in the sense of the Apostle, that "*we preach Christ crucified*"?

There are many ways of approaching this excellence without reaching it, and thus of one's failing in the fruits of an evangelical ministry without perceiving the cause. Some of these approximations, I will endeavor to describe.

It is possible to preach a great deal of important truth having an essential relation to the gospel—truth unmingled with any erroneous statement or principle. One's discourses may be very solemn and impressive, kindling strong emotions and exciting deep apprehensions in intelligent congregations—and because the people are affected, it may be supposed that the preacher is faithful. Because the former perceive nothing positively wrong, and hear and feel much that is decidedly good, they not unfrequently regard it as unquestionable evidence of the gospel character of the instruction to which they listen. And yet, without any strained supposition, it may be destitute of some or all of the great distinguishing features of the gospel; or if it contain them, may almost entirely conceal them, under the cumbersome framework in which they are set; and though it speak often of Christ and pathetically describe his agony and death, may be so meagre and confused, so general and feeble as to all those vital doctrines which lead to him and spring from him and depend on him, which lay the foundation and bind together the whole structure of christian faith, as to be wholly unworthy the name of the preaching of Christ. Suppose that the minister select such subjects as the uncertainty of life, the trial of death, the terrors of judgment, the everlasting retribution of the ungodly. Let him depict the vanity of the world —the excellence of religion—the bliss of heaven. Give him the persecution of Christ, and the various scenes in the tragedy of the crucifixion. Here are subjects, on which a lively and intelligent imagination, without any spirituality of mind or acquaintance with the operations of grace on the heart, may be strong and impressive; and yet how many imagine that to preach these forcibly is to preach the gospel! How often is preaching *about* Christ, confounded with preaching *Christ*—preaching from the imagination, with preaching from the heart! The minister may thus deceive himself, and the great majority of his people may be thus deceived; while some obscure, unlettered disciple, whose draughts of truth have been taken undiluted from the wells of salvation, will be sensible of some painful deficiency; and the anxious enquirer, thirsting for the gospel, will listen and wait in vain to be taught what he must do to be saved. Let us remember the wide difference between being able to preach forcibly on the importance of religion,

on the one hand; and on the other, to show clearly in what all spiritual, saving religion consists. It is one thing to prove that there is no salvation but in Christ; and quite another to direct a soul panting for mercy, how he is to "win Christ and be found in him." On such a text as: "*One thing is needful*," almost any intelligent and serious mind might preach without mistake or manifest deficiency. It requires much more preparation than mere intelligence and seriousness to preach well, with truth and clearness and fulness, upon such a text as: "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*" *&c.*

Again: One may preach with plainness and firmness the obligations of man—the commandments of the law—the precepts of the gospel—the entire condemnation of the sinner and the necessity of universal repentance. He may exhibit a deep seriousness in his ministry—an earnest solicitude for the fruits of righteousness; never hesitating at the strongest representations of the wrath of God and the sinner's peril—nor ever sparing the most urgent appeals to conscience and exhortations to obedience; and yet he may come far short of the most important work of his ministry and fail almost wholly of the conversion and sanctification of his people. While thus dwelling faithfully on the side of the law, perhaps with occasional glimpses of the gospel—while thus confined so much to duty and danger, though perhaps with occasional views of grace and glory; he may not understand that one great lesson which a minister should make his habitual study—how to exhibit the union and mutual relations of the Law and the Gospel—how to preach the gospel under the solemn sanctions of the law—the law under the gracious encouragements of the gospel; the one to convince of sin, the other to take away its condemnation; the former to furnish the rule, the latter, the grace of holy obedience. The preacher may be very clear upon the sinner's ruin, but very dark and indefinite upon the nature and means of his remedy. He may succeed in convincing one of the insufficiency of his own righteousness to make him acceptable to God; but fail grievously in shewing the all-sufficiency of the righteousness by faith. So fully does he teach the holy will of God, as reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart, that the hearer is brought to feel his entire inability through inherent

corruption to do it. But at this step of preparation for all the gracious disclosures of the gospel, his light goes out. The preacher fails importunately to direct him to the grace of God in Christ, as that which "worketh in us *to will and to do* of His good pleasure." "One thing is needful"—that grand argument of the gospel, which, after the failure of all others, has gained in all ages and places such wonderful victories over the hearts of the ungodly, the simple holding forth of "*Christ crucified*" in his amazing love and abounding grace—his tenderness to pity—his freeness to receive—his power to save to the uttermost; the fulness of his merits to remove the condemnation, and of his spirit to sanctify the heart, of the chief of sinners.

Such a preacher, as I have endeavored to describe, was in a great measure exemplified in the earlier ministry of the now evangelical Chalmers. His labor was fruitless. It remained so, till (to use his words) he got impressed by the utter alienation of his heart in all its affections and desires from God; it was not till reconciliation to him, became the distinct and prominent object of his ministerial exertions; it was not till he took the scriptural way of laying the method of reconciliation before his people; it was not till the free offer of forgiveness through the blood of Christ was urged upon their acceptance, and the Holy Spirit given through the channel of Christ's Mediatorship to all who ask it, was set before them as the unceasing object of their dependence and their prayers; it was not, in one word, till the contemplation of his people was turned to these great and essential elements in the business of a soul providing for its interests with God and the concerns of its eternity, that he ever heard of those changes of character and life, which before he had earnestly and zealously sought after.*

Again: A minister, in addition to the features already described, may make a great use in almost every discourse of the name of the Redeemer and occasionally his person or office may be presented with some appropriate prominence, and taught with unexceptionable distinctness; and yet it may be only when the text, according to plain rhetorical propriety, demands this treat-

* Address to the inhabitants of Kilmany.

ment that Christ is thus set forth; and the minister may not very frequently select such texts as would thus constrain him. Passing from one subject to another, their succession may bring him in course, to something involving of necessity a concentrated attention to the Saviour, in some of the great bearings of his work; and then he may be sufficiently explicit and correct; while the spiritually minded hearer, attending upon the whole train of his preaching, will look in vain for such a graceful bending of every discourse towards "the Author and Finisher of our faith;" such a skilful interweaving of all other legitimate topics with those cardinal truths that centre in the cross, as will show at once, however remote the subject from the centre of the gospel system, that it obeys the attraction and shines in the light of Christ. There is no such habitual passing to and fro between the ruin of man by sin, and his remedy by the Saviour; between the covenant written on stone and working death, and the covenant of grace, written on the heart and working life, as that whatever the preacher teaches shall have left on it the sign of the cross, and the whole tenor of his work shall proclaim that *for him to preach is Christ.*

Having thus endeavored to set before you some of those ways by which one's ministry may approach the character of the preaching of Christ, without occupying decidedly and effectually that happy ground, it is time we were attending more directly to the enquiry with which we set out—what is it so to preach that it may justly be said in regard to our habitual ministry that "*we preach Christ crucified*?"

The gospel is a *system* of truth and duty; its parts all harmonious and mutually relevant and dependant. It has a centre, luminous, glorious, all-controling, to which all the parts around refer for the light in which they are revealed, and the harmony of their every bearing. You can neither illustrate this system till you have shown its central power and light—nor fully describe its centre without exhibiting the various relations and dependencies of its surrounding system. The centre is Christ. All lines meet in him—all light and life come from him—all truth is dark till he is risen upon the scene. Lesser lights are only to rule the night. It is for the sun to rule the day.

Now what is the best mode of exhibiting this wonderful arrangement of grace, so that he who runs may read? Where will you begin? At the outskirts of the system, taking up first its remoter elements, and reasoning on from one relation to another till you get to Christ? To do this clearly, you must give it the time of many discourses. In some circumstances and after a more direct method has been well employed, it may be well. But supposing a people ignorant in a great measure of the first principles of the gospel, how can you keep them waiting so long in the dark? They have come to see the King—and however important may seem to you their tardy introduction, every thing seems to them impertinent, till they have been admitted to His presence. You find your hearer as a benighted traveller, afraid to continue his way, lest there be a precipice at his feet. You may present him with a chart of his road, but how will it help him as long as he cannot see? He waits the sunrise. One ray from the sun will serve him better than a thousand maps to be read in the dark. Then, but not till then, will a chart of the country be important.

Astronomers, in teaching the doctrine of the solar system, begin with the sun. They proceed directly to tell what it is, and what it does. This is the first thing to be understood. Nothing in the science can be explained, till this is explained. Let the teacher of the gospel system imitate the example. So I perceive the Apostles began. In their preaching, I behold no gradual, ceremonious approach from a great distance, like the parallels of a siege, to the one object of their ministry. There was one Personage whom it was the immediate business of their Apostleship to introduce to sinners—"*Jesus of Nazareth, the only begotten son of God, full of grace and truth.* There was one capital event in his history, which it was their immediate business to make known to every creature—*Jesus crucified as a propitiation for the sin of the whole world.* To these, their ministry immediately leaped. Here they always broke ground first and set up their tower of attack. Just at the point, where their enemies, in malignant triumph, supposed the gospel had died, with the cross of its entombed founder for its only memorial, his disciples, in the triumph of faith, and lifting up that cross for a banner, made their beginning. Just that which laid the stumbling block to the

Jew and seemed such foolishness to the Greek, they adopted as the head and front of their preaching; advancing boldly upon both Jew and Greek, like David with his single stone against the contemptuous giant of Gath; glorying in nothing, determined to use nothing, "save Jesus Christ and him crucified." Thus saith St. Paul: "I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, did they at once lift up Christ on the cross, as an ensign to the people. They could not spare time to be rooting out prejudices, and gradually preparing the minds of the unbelieving Jews and Gentiles for the great subject of Christ's atonement. They knew no way of removing darkness so sure as that of introducing the sun; no way of subduing the enmity of the heart to the gospel so short as that of making men acquainted with the very essence of the gospel. Human device would have said to St. Paul, 'Make use of your philosophy for an introduction to your theology—call science to your aid—shew the fitness of things—impress your audience with a respectful idea of your attainments in the wisdom of the schools; aim at the nerve of Demosthenes—put on the golden robes of Cicero—speak of your Master in his manhood, in his miracles, benevolence and piety; compare his precepts with those of heathen sages; but cast a veil over his ignominious death, and the humiliating plan of salvation through faith in his suffering, till the public mind shall be somewhat inured to the less offensive features of his religion.' "No," said St. Paul, "lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." There was a declaration of the Master which an Apostle could not misunderstand; *I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.*" In this they read the secret of their success. Lifted up on the cross by his enemies, he had been already. Lifted up in the sight of all people, he was now to be by the ministry of the word. Their principle was, "God giveth the increase," and "hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty," "that no flesh—(that neither preacher nor convert) should glory in his presence," but that all may feel that it is "Christ Jesus who, of God, is made un-

to them wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

Here then, my brethren, have we our lesson. Our first, as well as last and habitual duty, every where, amidst all prejudices, ignorance and enmity, is to take ground, with all confidence, at the centre of the system, and at once set up the cross. We must exalt Christ in his death—establish its propitiatory character; publish its sufficiency for the whole world. Thus will you begin your message where a sinner begins his hopes and life. To open your negotiation any where else, is but to delay it. But having begun here, what remains? The sun is risen; now see that it remains unclouded, always in full view from the remotest circle of your hearers, so that the weakest and lowest eye may see. Now you must keep up attention to this supreme object, by telling your people all that the scriptures tell you of Christ. Your business is that they may "know Christ and be found in him." Consequently there is nothing revealed as pertaining to him that is not profitable to them, or that you have a right to keep back. You are to make him known in the glory which he had with the Father before the world was. The love of the Father in sending His only begotten Son; and of the Son in coming to be made a curse for us, can be preached only in view of the Son in the self-existence and infinite glory of the Godhead. You cannot separate the cross *for which he came*, from the *throne whence he came*, without divesting his death of its atoning virtue and his love of all its wonders. In the same vital connexion is the Incarnation of the Son of God. The mysteries of Bethlehem are closely allied to those of Calvary. To understand how he bore our sorrows, we must learn how he took our nature. You cannot teach his obedience unto the death, without his condescension to be born in the likeness of man. In setting forth the Lamb of God, in his death as a sacrifice, you must also set him forth in his life as an example "without blemish and without spot."—There is too little preaching of "the mind that was in Christ Jesus." It was his preparation for the sacrifice. It must be ours for all the bliss which that sacrifice has purchased. But the preaching of Christ too often terminates with the events of his crucifixion; as if when the sacrifice was finished, the whole work of redemp-

tion were finished—as if to preach him in his resurrection, and ascension and exaltation, were not as important as to preach him in his humiliation and agony. To show the sinner that his atonement is accepted, you must show that it has been presented at the mercy-seat; you must exhibit our great High Priest as having laid aside the garments of sacrifice for those of dignity and glory, and ascended into the holy place on high; "now to appear in the presence of God for us." Intercession must be preached as the crowning act in redemption. But intimately connected with this office of Christ as our interceding Priest, bearing our names upon his breastplate, is that of the great Prophet of his Church, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and of whom every disciple must learn "the way, the truth and the life." Essential also to the right enforcement of his priestly and prophetic office, is the exhibition of Christ, "exalted to be a Prince" as well as Saviour, having "all power in heaven and earth," claiming supreme dominion in the hearts of his people—able to subdue all enemies under his feet, and make all things work together for good to them that love him. It is Christ reigning as King—"Head over all things to his church," that sets the seal to all that is precious in his teaching as our Prophet, and all that is availing in his mediation as our Priest.—that clothes our message with authority, as well as with mercy and wisdom; and makes the tender entreaties of divine compassion, the peremptory commands of infinite sovereignty. For no purpose is a heavenly skill in the preacher more needed than to exhibit the tenderness of Christ as enforced by his authority, and his authority as commended by his tenderness—to preach him as a Judge and also as an Advocate—to declare not only the love but the "wrath of the Lamb;" to exhibit his infinite freeness, fulness, and power to save the chief of sinners, and yet the rigid exclusiveness of his salvation to him "that believeth"; so as always "to speak a word in season to him that is weary," and never a word of encouragement to him that persists in his sins. The cross, like the pillar of cloud, is all light to the people of God—all darkness to such as neglect so great salvation.

By these imperfect hints, I have endeavored to illustrate what I understand by preaching Christ in his person and office, as the effulgent centre of Christianity.

From what has been so defectively exhibited, it appears that as in the sun there is an axis, around which the whole orb of light revolves; so in the preaching of Christ there is a centre, in which all his attributes and offices and works as the Saviour of sinners unite, and which, in whatever aspect we behold him must always be in view—*his death.*

But, in Christ Jesus, there are many cardinal truths, connected with him by various relations and dependencies, and occupying, as it were, the remoter circle of the christian system, which a preacher cannot keep out of sight without great unfaithfulness. Be it remembered that while the cross, with its immediate neighborhood, is the metropolis of Christianity, "the city of our God"; all the region round about is the Holy Land flowing with milk and honey, "a land of brooks and fountains of water," intersected in all directions with high ways to the holy place, by which the tribes go up. It is the office of the preacher to map out that land; to display its treasures—to trace those converging roads, so that whenever a sinner may desire to know how he may get to Zion, his eye may read—"*This is the way, walk ye in it.*" Then only is Christ preached in the fulness of the gospel, when nothing is left untaught that enters into the plan of salvation as a covenant of mercy and life, established between God and sinners, in the hand of an infinitely meritorious Mediator.

Some, under the idea of glorying only in the cross, confine their preaching almost exclusively to a few topics more immediately connected with the death of Christ—such as atonement, faith, and justifying righteousness, to the great neglect of numerous derivative or introductory truths of absolute necessity to a just exposition of the gospel. But the spiritual wisdom of a minister is to be exercised in giving to every part of the gospel plan its portion in due season, assigning to all subjects their places according to their rank in importance, and exhibiting each in its relations to the others and to Christ.

Do we speak of Christ as the sinner's righteousness unto complete justification through faith? (and continually should we present him in this blessed aspect;) then must we show the sinner his absolute need of such righteousness. To do this, we must awaken his conscience. He must be so convinced of sin as to feel

that he is condemned and lost without that refuge. Blessed is he whom God has taught to teach this lesson. Our text book is the law. By it is the knowledge of sin. Preached in a spiritual application to the thoughts and intents of the heart, not only as a rule of life to all, but as the condition of salvation to every one who does not accept the salvation of Christ, on the perfect keeping of which depends all his hope, and the tremendous curse of which is incurred by a single transgression—preached in view of the cross as establishing, instead of impairing its obligation; as confirming, instead of diminishing the certainty of its penalty, upon every soul of man that doeth evil without repentance; it is made the instrument of the Holy Ghost to convince men of sin—to strip off their self-righteousness, and as a "schoolmaster, to lead them to Christ." He that would preach justification by faith in Christ, must also preach entire condemnation by works under the law; he must lay his foundation in clear, unequivocal statements of the divine law, in all the uncompromising strictness of its demands: taking special care to show that it looks with as little favor as when first promulgated, upon imperfect, though sincere obedience; that every, the least transgression, incurs the condemnation of God, as much under the dispensation of Christ, as under that which preceded; consequently, that whosoever is not justified by faith, being shut up under this law, is "*condemned already.*" Thus to preach the law is the direct method of preparing the way of the Lord. More consciences would be awakened; more hearts would know the need and the preciousness of Christ, were there more directness and clearness in thus pressing upon those who are still under the law, as a condition of life, its unmitigated strictness, and therefore their own present and entire condemnation. From this, to repentance and faith, the way is plain.

Again: Do we preach Christ, as "of God, made unto us *sanctification?*" we must not expect that our hearers will appreciate this excellency of the knowledge of Christ, till we have taken pains to exhibit that condition of entire depravity by nature which makes them so absolutely dependent on his sanctifying grace. Hence, in our preaching, a large department should be assigned to the setting forth of that original state of spiritual ruin

and death—that enmity against God, and natural inclination to evil, which "is the corruption of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam," and under which he is not and cannot be in subjection to the divine commands. This leads directly to the absolute necessity of a new birth unto righteousness, and makes the subject of spiritual regeneration, its evidences and fruits, of conspicuous magnitude in the preaching of Christ. And this again introduces the sinner, now sensible of his disease and helplessness and necessity, to the only Physician. Then comes in the agency of the Holy Ghost. Christ is not preached in faithfulness, unless the Holy Ghost, "who proceedeth from the Father and the Son," is distinctly and continually preached as of the same divine nature with both; alike to be honored and worshipped; sent of Christ to be the teacher, the sanctifier, and the comforter, of sinners; the author and preserver of all spiritual life; by whom alone we are born again, and daily renewed in the spirit of our minds—the spirit of all prayer, wisdom and holiness; without whom we are as little able *to will* as *to do*, of God's good pleasure. To be full of the Holy Ghost in one's sermons as well as soul—to keep up the attention of the sinner as continually to his influences, for all the beginnings of spiritual life, and all growth in grace, as to the righteousness of Christ for all reconciliation to God, is not only the way to be blessed with increase in our work, but to preach Christ as he preached himself.

In the preaching of Christ, there is a text which a minister should, in some shape or other, be always illustrating:—"By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. *Not of works*, lest any man should boast." Let it be his continual effort to magnify the grace of God in all the work of salvation. He cannot exceed the truth in that which has no bounds. But there is another text of equal emphasis, which St. Paul connects with the other, as we should always connect them in our ministry. "Created in Christ Jesus *unto good works* which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Works of righteousness are no less earnestly to be preached as essential fruits of a saving faith, than to be renounced as having any part in our justification with God. We are to make the

office of faith so prominent, that without it there can be no union to Christ; and the necessity of works so absolute, that without them there is no evidence of faith; and at the same time, both faith and works are to be represented as deriving all their efficacy, value and existence, from Christ their source and end.

We are bound to speak freely of the believer's privileges in Christ, that we may increase his joy; but to insist also with equal stress upon his obligation to live unto Christ, that we may increase his devotedness. "*All are your's, and ye are Christ's,*" is the text in this matter—obligation increased by privilege. So must we preach the precepts of Christ, as to lead men to the embracing of his promises; and so proclaim his promises that instead of the neglect, we may encourage men to the obedience of his precepts. In all this, we have two great arguments for persuasion,—"the mercies and the terrors of the Lord"—both as deriving their greatest force from the cross of Christ. While we invite and entreat by all the considerations arising out of the love of God in the gift of his Son, and the love of the Son in the sacrifice of himself, and the boundless mercies thus presented for all that will sacrifice themselves to Christ; we are not to keep in the back ground, nor touch lightly and timidly upon those more offensive because more alarming truths, which shew the dreadful peril of those who reject the Saviour. On the contrary, it belongs inseparably to the preaching of Christ, to warn the impenitent of the wrath of God, not only fearlessly but frequently; with tenderness indeed, but also with the utmost solemnity; not sparing the strongest representations of the misery of the lost as depicted in the scriptures, nor shrinking from the plainest and most direct application to the minds of such as obey not the gospel of Christ. Never does eternal retribution appear so awful as when contemplated in view of Christ crucified and Christ neglected. But in this, as in all other methods of our ministry, let there be a manifest preference of the more winning arguments, so that grace may reign in our discourses as it reigns in the gospel committed to us. If we warn the impenitent and show the cloud of retribution that overshadows them, let us tell them always of "a voice out of the midst of the cloud" inviting them to Christ. If we lead them to the contemplation of an offended God, seated

on a throne of justice and judgment," let us not cease till they have seen that, for the encouragement of every returning sinner, there is a "rainbow about the throne." Let us study to exhibit in due proportion "*the goodness and severity* of God," the former so as not to prevent the remembrance that "God is a consuming fire"—the latter so as to keep always in view the precious truth that "God is Love." The just balance of judgment and mercy, invitation and warning, privileges and requirements, under the general duty of teaching and preaching Jesus Christ, is not to be determined by rules; but learned by prayer to Him who gives the word in season.

Before leaving this all-important subject, it is well to give a brief attention to the enquiry, *to what extent we are bound to introduce the way of salvation through Christ into every discourse.* Some would answer that no sermon is truly evangelical, unless it contain a plain exhibition of what a sinner must do to be saved. But were it our duty so to order our ministry that, in every sermon, the way of salvation should be introduced; not by force, but naturally, and by legitimate connexion with the main subject; not merely in a few sentences, too general to be understood by the ignorant, and too common-place to arrest the attention of any, but in a manner adapted to enlighten the mind and affect the heart; then the preacher would be always confined to one neighborhood of subjects, and numerous subordinate ones that are "profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness," must be almost excluded or receive at best, a very limited, occasional and unsatisfactory consideration. Such is not the lesson obtained from the scriptures. Christ is continually exhibited in the Old Testament annals. They contain the history of his Church as waiting and looking for his appearing. Christ is preached in the whole system of the Mosaic institutions, which were but a shadow of the good things to be found in him. The tabernacle, with its ark and mercy-seat; its altars and furniture; its offerings and daily service—the priesthood, the pillar of cloud, the manna, the rock and the cities of refuge—all spake of Christ. "To him give all the prophets witness." "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of Prophecy." How entirely every page of the New Testament is pervaded with the same, I need not say. But

we do not see, in the New Testament or in the Old, such a confinement to the vicinity of the cross, that no distinct subject is relinquished, till it has led to some distinct exhibition of the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. Every thing has a bearing that way, but does not fall directly into that line. Its course is bent, like the orbit of a planet, by the attraction of that centre; so that though it may never be turned directly, it is always inclined towards the latter, and rendering continual homage to its supremacy. The inspired writers with one common centre, occupied a range of great extent and variety, while at every point they could receive light from the cross, and say, "Behold the Lamb of God."

I would say, therefore, that, as no subject can be considered legitimate in the pulpit that does not contain an important bearing upon Christ, as to some part of his vital connexion with sinners; so no sermon can be justly considered evangelical, that does not faithfully exhibit and enforce such bearing, so as to assign to the Lord Jesus that position, in reference to the whole discourse, which he holds in respect to the whole body of truth and faith of which he is the vital head. Some subjects have a much nearer and more direct relation to Christ than others. These, and especially such as contain prominently his death, an evangelical preacher will choose as very decidedly the favorite and the most frequent occupants of his pulpit. Others however, because more distant, are not unimportant, and should not be overlooked. "The body" of divine truth "is not one member but many;" and no preacher may say even to its feeblest extremity, "I have no need of thee." That which tests the evangelical character of a *subject* is the question: *Does it bear witness to Christ?* That which tests the evangelical character of a *sermon* is the question: *Whether the testimony of Jesus, according to the truth as it is in Jesus, be its spirit and tendency?* That which measures the evangelical character of one's *habitual ministry*, is the more general question: *Whether such testimony in spirit, as well as truth, in "the mind of Christ," as well as according to "the oracles of God," is its pervading, omnipresent characteristic.*

Thus it is evident that, in a course of faithful preaching, one may have great variety. His ministry may be always shining in

the light of Christ; while receiving it, sometimes directly from himself—sometimes by reflection from a whole firmament of secondary objects, all declaring his glory as their "all and in all." It may be always leading the sinner to behold the Lamb of God; and yet in aspects and relations as various as the innumerable positions from which his view is taken, and the diversified circumstances in which one can need the consolations of religion. More variety than this can only be obtained by a departure from duty and faithfulness; and should be as little tempting to a minister as it is profitable to his hearers.

I am sensible, my Brethren, that in the view we have now taken, while we have far exceeded the time usually allotted to a pulpit discourse, (to excuse which we must plead the unusual nature of this address, with the great importance of its theme;) we have done but little, nevertheless, towards an adequate treatment of the various topics involved under the general subject of the preaching of Christ.

How much does a minister preach, either in aid of, or against the gospel, by his whole spirit and life. How important therefore, in connexion with what has been spoken, is a clear and faithful exhibition of the spirit of love, and zeal, and holiness, with which a preacher should in his example accompany gospel doctrine, and the influence it will give to all the service of his lips.

But I must hasten to the conclusion, by exhorting you to the cultivation of that one christian grace in your ministry, by which the Apostle's labors were so eminently distinguished—I mean *the grace of faith.* They preached not only as men who believed, and therefore spake, the message committed to them; but as using an argument which, however powerless in itself, was the chosen one of God, by which it is His will to declare his power and grace in the salvation of souls. Thus they felt that in using this, they had "the arm of the Lord." No spiritual death—no conflict "with principalities and powers," disheartened their zeal. Because their great argument was foolishness to the wise, they were not the less confident in its efficacy as the wisdom of God. With this, they aimed at, and confidently expected, great results. God gave the increase. According to their faith and not their strength, was their success. It was *their faith,* in the diligent use

of God's own weapon, that overcame the world. When our ministry shall be more like theirs in the grace of faith, it will approach more nearly to theirs in the blessing of increase.

Let us strive, my Brethren, after a great increase of faith in the preaching of Christ crucified. Let us make no division of confidence between this divine ordinance and others of human "art and man's device." There be some who seem to hope for but little effect from the plain, faithful preaching of the cross, except in proportion as it is mixed up with certain artificial expedients of arresting attention and exciting emotion. There is an appetite for excitement and novelty in the mode of awakening and converting sinners, which seems to be rapidly increasing in some quarters of the Church of Christ, as well in an insatiate thirst for more potent stimulants, as in the number of its subjects. It is lamentably discarding the simplicity of the Gospel, and substituting a kind of preaching, which, with a special pretence of faithfulness and much redundancy and painful irreverence in the use of divine names, is sadly wanting in divine things and spirit; laying almost exclusive stress upon a few disjointed members of gospel truth, and producing most deformed examples of gospel efficacy. There is something too tame and sober in the old paths of inspired preachers, for the taste of some in these days. *To teach* as well as *preach*—to go the round of christian truth, instead of being confined to one or two of its more striking parts, has become the "strange work" of many. To excite the sensibilities by swollen representations, rather than to enlighten the conscience by sober and practical exposition of scripture; to produce effect by drawing lines of visible separation among the people, by bringing the incipient anxieties of the heart into dangerous and unbecoming publicity, and by the hurrying forward of those whose minds are yet unsettled and unexamined, to an open profession of religion and perhaps a forward lead in devotional exercises, has become the mournful characteristic of much of the ministry that is called evangelical. It may boast many converts; but time will show that it boasts "the lame, the halt, and the blind." It is but another road, though a very short one, to all formality, coldness and spiritual death. There is such a thing as a zealous formality—a stimulated coldness—an excited

corpse. Be such reliances, as I have described, far from you, my Brethren! Be jealous of any measure that would divide your faith in the efficacy of the simple preaching of Christ crucified, accompanied "with all prayer and supplication in the spirit." Seek your *power*, directly, entirely, in the influences of the Holy Ghost to awaken, convince, convert and sanctify the sinner. Behold your *means* in whatever will contribute to the teaching and preaching of Jesus Christ. Use such means with importunate waiting upon God for his blessing, and your ministry "shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; whose leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever it doeth shall prosper." While continually laboring under the practical conviction that God only "giveth the increase;" endeavor so to believe in his promises, as to feel the animating assurance, that God will give increase to the diligent application of that, which he has chosen for his chief instrument in the conversion of sinners. Have faith in God! Preach as believing not only in the unspeakable importance of the truth you deliver, but also in the power and faithfulness of your Master to make it mighty to the casting down of whatever opposes the gospel in the hearts of your people. There is power in faith to remove mountains! One of the first steps towards the promotion of your greater usefulness, is the prayer of the Apostle: "*Lord increase our faith.*" May the Lord in his great love wherewith he loveth us, be pleased to pour out upon you a spirit of grace and supplication, that, your faith being strengthened and your zeal quickened to all diligence and faithfulness, many may be added unto the Lord under your ministry, and "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."